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WALKS IN A FOREST;

OR,

P O E M S

DESCRIPTIVE OF SCENERY AND INCIDENTS CHARACTERISTIC OF
A FOREST,

AT DIFFERENT SEASONS OF THE YEAR.

INSCRIBED TO THE

REVEREND WILLIAM MASON,

OF ASTON, IN YORKSHIRE.

By Mr. Gisborne

LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. DAVIS,

FOR B. AND J. WHITE, FLEET-STREET.

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DEDICATION

intelligible to persons not accustomed studiously to con-
template the face of nature, and might appear tedious
and minute even to accurate observers. The woodland
REVEREND WILLIAM MASON.
To myself they have been familiar from my
childhood. And long familiarity at length produced the
familiarity now inscribed to you in the intervals of those
hours which you know to have been much occupied
with more serious pursuits.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am, dear Sir,

THOUGH you are unapprized of the exist-
ence of the following trifles, you will easily discover
whence they come; and I am confident, from the proofs
which I have already experienced of your partial kind-
ness, that you will accept them favourably. However lit-
tle gratification they may be able to afford you as poetry,
you will be pleased with them as a tribute of friendship.
They are meant to delineate the scenes and incidents,
which they notice, with particularity sufficient to mark
the characteristic features of each; and to avoid, on the
one hand, vague and indeterminate description; and on
the other, such a degree of detail as would prove scarcely
intelligible

DEDICATION.

intelligible to persons not accustomed studiously to contemplate the face of nature, and might appear tedious and minute even to accurate observers. The woodland tracts which gave life to them have been admired by us together. To myself they have been familiar from my childhood. And long familiarity at length produced the sketches now inscribed to you in the intervals of those hours, which you know to have been much occupied with more serious pursuits.

I am, dear Sir,

Your obliged and affectionate friend,
THE AUTHOR,
which I have already experienced of your partial kindness, that you will accept them favourably. However fit the gratification they may be able to afford you as poetry, you will be pleased with them as a tribute of friendship. They are meant to delineate the scenes and incidents, which they notice, with particularity sufficient to mark the characteristic features of each; and to avoid, on the one hand, vague and indeterminate description; and on the other, such a degree of detail as would prove scarcely intelligible

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WALKS IN A FOREST.

WALK THE FIRST.

SPRING.

"THE meanest * herb we trample in the field,
 " Or nurture in the garden, when its leaf
 " At Winter's touch is blasted, and its place
 " Forgotten, soon its vernal buds renews,
 " And from short slumber wakes to life again.
 " Man wakes no more! Man, valiant, glorious, wise,

* Αι, αι, ται μαλακαι μεν επαν καλα καπον αλωσαι,
 Η τα χλωρα σελινα, το τ ευθαλεις κλον ανθου,

Τερον αυ ζουσι, και εις ετος αλλο φουσι.

Αμμες δ' οι μεγαλοι, και χαρτεροι, η σοφοι ανδρες,

Οπποτε πρωτα θανωμεν, ανακοοι εν χθονι κοιλα

Ευδομεν εν μαλα μακρον, αλερμενα, ηγυρετον υπνον.

MOSCHUS, IN EPITAPH. BION.

B

" When

" When death once chills him sinks in sleep profound,
 " A long, unconscious, never ending sleep!"
 So mourn'd the untutor'd bard, wandering when May,
 As now, the plains revived; ere * sprang the Prince
 Of righteousness, with healing on his wings,
 Triumphant from the sepulchre; while he,
 Hell's Ruler, he who late, madden'd with joy,
 Had pointed to his Powers in air convened,
 With many a scoff and many a bitter sneer
 Impious, the sad procession as it moved
 From Calvary to the yet unclosed tomb,
 View'd the grave yield its conqueror; and aghast,
 And from his eminence as by lightning hurl'd,
 Shunn'd in the deepest midnight of his realms
 The wrath of earth and heaven's Almighty Lord.
 Said the complaining lay, "Man wakes no more?"
 O blind, who read'st not in the teeming soil,
 The freshening meadow, and the bursting wood,
 A nobler lesson! God, who in the gloom
 Of Gentile darkness on an erring world
 Pitying look'd down, nor without † witness left
 His providential care, bade Nature's voice

* Moschus flourished about two hundred years before the Christian era.

† Acts xiv. 17. Romans i. 20.

To man his future destiny suggest:
 30 Bade Spring with annual admonition hold
 Her emblematic taper; not with blaze
 Potent each shade of doubt and fear to chase,
 Yet friendly through the perilous dusk to aid
 His steps, till the dawn crimson'd, and arose
 The long expected day-star in the East.
 That star has risen; and with a light, which shames
 The sun's meridian splendor, has illumed
 The distant wonders of eternity.
 Yet may this sylvan wild, from Winter's grasp
 40 Now rescued, to the musing mind recall
 Its promised immortality; while roves
 The eye unfat'd with delight from shade
 To shade, from grove to thicket, from near group
 To yon primæval woods with darkening sweep
 Retiring; and with beauty fees the whole
 Kindle, and glow with renovat'd life.
 Each native of the forest, from the rude
 And towering trunk down to the tangled bush,
 Its own peculiar character resumes.
 50 Chief of the glade, the oak its foliage stain'd
 With tender olive and pale brown protrudes,
 Proud of a shelter'd monarch, proud to lend

A chaplet still to British loyalty.
 Even yet with ruddy spoils from Autumn won
 Loaded, the beech its lengthen'd buds untwines,
 Its knotted bloom secured, the ash puts forth
 The tardy leaf: the hawthorn wraps its boughs
 In snowy mantle: from the vivid greens
 That shine around, the holly, winter's pride,
 Recedes abash'd. The willow, in yon vale,
 Its silver lining to the breeze upturns,
 And rustling aspens shiver by the brook;
 While the unfulfill'd stream, from April showers
 Refined, each sparkling pebble shews that decks
 Its bottom; and each scaly habitant
 Quick glancing in the shallows, or in quest
 Of plunder slowly sailing in the deep,
 Beneath the shadowing canopy the ground
 Glitters with flowery dies; the primrose, first
 In mossy dell returning Spring to greet;
 Pilewort, with varnish'd bloom, and spotted leaf;
 And hooded arum, with its purple club;
 Anemone*, now robed in virgin white,
 Now blushing with faint crimson; changeful spurge†,

* Wood anemone. *Anemone nemorosa* Linn.

† Wood spurge. *Euphorbia amygdaloides* Linn.

On redden'd stem turgid with milky sap,
 And circled with dark foliage, rearing high
 Its golden head; sorrel*, whose modest cups
 Midst verdure wan their streaky veins conceal;
 The pendent harebell; and the scentless plant†,
 That with the violet's borrow'd form and hue
 The unskilful wanderer in the shade deceives.
 Flutter with wings the branches, and resound
 With notes that suit a forest. Hoarsely screams
 The jay. With shrill and oft repeated cry
 Her angular course, alternate rise and fall,
 The woodpecker pursues; then to the trunk
 Close clinging, with incessant knockings shakes
 The hollow bark; through every cell the stroke
 Echoes; hope glistens on her verdant plumes,
 And brighter scarlet sparkles on her crest.
 Chatters the restless pie. In sober brown
 Drest, but with nature's tenderest pencil touch'd,
 The wryneck her monotonous complaint
 Continues‡; harbinger of her, who doom'd:

* Wood sorrel. *Oxalis acetosella* Linn. † Dog's violet. *Viola canina* Linn.

‡ The Welsh consider this bird as the forerunner or servant of the cuckoo, and call it *gwás y gog*, or the cuckoo's attendant. The Swedes regard it in the same light. Pennant's *Brit. Zool.* 4th edit. vol. i. p. 238. In the midland counties of England the common people call it the cuckoo's maiden.

Never

Never the sympathetic joy to know
 That warms the mother cowering o'er her young,
 Some stranger robs, and to that stranger's love
 Her egg commits unnatural; the nurse
 Deluded the voracious nestling feeds
 100 With toil unceasing, and amazed beholds
 Its form gigantic and discordant hue.
 Meanwhile the tuneful race their brooding mates
 Cheer, perch'd at hand; or with parental care
 From twig to twig their timid offspring lead;
 Teach them to seize the unwary gnat, to poise
 Their pinions, in short flights their strength to prove,
 And venturous trust the bosom of the air.

Nor want these lawns that terminate the woods
 Their tenants. O'er the gorse with agile bounds
 110 Spring the light deer, and sportive scour the plain
 In mock pursuit. Pour'd from the neighbouring farms
 Wide stray the cattle. Mark yon wearied herd;
 Mark the unguarded front, the slender limb,
 The tawny ear, and sable-vested side.
 From Scotia's hills they come, there wont to pick
 From rocky chinks the blade, or bruise the tops
 Of heath and prickly furze, when winter reign'd;
 Or in the stormy Hebrides forlorn

Rush duly from the moor, scenting afar *

120 The ebbing tide, and prowling on the sand,
And midst the slippery stones, with weeds marine
And ocean's refuse famine's rage repel.
Now in mild clime and copious pasture placed
Their driver quits them; he, who deck'd in plaid,
And plumed bonnet, had their steps pursued
All the long tedious march; and still when beat
The shower, around his limbs regardless wrapt
His chequer'd covering; and when cross'd the road
Some spring's pure current, from the knapsack drew
130 His bowl and oaten flour, and frugal mix'd
His fare, delicious to his palate braced
By labour, and by luxury unpall'd.

Tremble the glades. Yon hill's majestic gloom
Portentous shakes. Heard ye not Britain's voice
Speaking in thunder to the woods? She calls
Their long protected growth her shores to guard
With tributary aid, and round her isle
Found on the seas an adamant wall.
Pierce we those shades. The solitude resounds
140 With busy life. The uplifted axe, urged deep
By finewy arms, while the well planted feet

* See Pennant's Tour in Scotland.

Keep firm the muscles of the straining back,
 Delves the resisting trunk; from every stroke
 Wide fly the fragments. With impetuous force,
 While from his furious sweep the victors fly,
 Prone falls the sylvan monarch; with the dread
 Concussion quakes the forest; loudly crash
 His splinter'd arms; and ruin spreads the ground.
 Now this now that way drawn the harsh saw grates,
 Severing the mighty limbs: Those strip the bark;
 In heaps these rear it. Those the thinner boughs
 Hew to fit lengths; these in well order'd tiers
 Dispose them, sedulous the pile to raise,
 Which, with stout greenward roof from wet secured,
 May burn to footy charcoal. Near its side
 Yon children in the ground their pliant poles
 Fix, and the tops unite: these, interlaced
 With twigs, his wigwam as the Indian weaves
 In transatlantic wilds, or cloth'd with turf
 As builds his summer hut on mountain top
 The Cambrian herdsman, shelter shall afford,
 While the slow-kindled mass they tend, and watch
 To ope in time fresh inlets for the breeze,
 And pierce new chimnies for the imprison'd smoke.
 Soon the peel'd trunk, rest of its branched head,

And

And by mechanic force upheaved, shall quit
 Its native lawn, while the tired oxen pant,
 And groans the wain beneath the ponderous load.

170 So fade the chieftains of the wood; their place
 Knows them no more; the desolated blank
 Gapes, and admits the long excluded day.
 Yet swiftly through the void their shoots shall push
 Contiguous saplings, and with stately stems
 And ample spread shall emulate their fires.
 Thus when the statesman and the warrior fall,
 Britain dejected mourns; but soon a race,
 With memory of paternal virtue warm'd,
 Pleads in the senate, conquers in the field;
 And while approving heaven the purpose crowns,
 Upholds the reign of freedom, and of law,
 181 - Of social order, and domestic peace.

th
ons

And by mechanic force upheaved, shall quit
his native lawn, while the tired ocean pants
And gives the main beneath the ponderous load
So fade the chimneys of the wood; their place
Knows them no more; the desolated bank
Gapes, and admits the long excluded day
Yet swiftly through the void their throes shall pass
Congruous lapings, and with fairly stem
And ample spread shall emulate their first
Thus when the stationer and the warrior fall
Britain's spotted moor; but soon a race
With memory of parental virtue warmed
Bleeds in the fence, conquers in the field;
And while approving heaven the purple crown
Upholds the reign of freedom, and of law
Of social order, and domestic peace.

W A I R

WALK THE SECOND.

SUMMER.—NOON.

THE solstice rages; Nature sinks oppress
 Beneath the fultry glow. Hide me, ye woods,
 Hide in your shades impenetrable; waft
 A breeze reviving from your inmost depths;
 While your tall trunks between I gaze abroad
 On the parch'd world, or watch the trooping deer
 Safe in the covert from the scorching ray
 Shelter'd. They fly not me; no murderous tube
 Gleams in my hand: but far aloof they shun
 Him, whose green vesture and suspicious gait
 Mark him their authorised destroyer. Few
 And those short-seeming hours since morn have past;
 Yet this brief interval the clime has changed
 From temperate zone to torrid. Scatter'd clouds,
 With orient blush empurpled, half obscured
 The rising orb of light; gray mists diffused

O'er the wide lawn, and from the wooded hill
 Dim through their skirts discerned retiring flow,
 His struggling beams restrain'd; yon reverend oaks,
 Fronting the east, across the ample vale
 Stretch'd their long shadows; glisten'd bright with dew
 The grass; and cool and balmy breathed the air.
 Now from the burning firmament the Sun
 Each cloud has driven; with universal light
 Blazing, the earth repels the dazzled eye,
 Save where a lonely spot of shade lies close
 Beneath some massy tree, or woods extend
 Their dark recesses; the faint traveller's step
 The tann'd and slippery plain deceives; and fierce
 As when in Indian realms it rages, heat
 The breeze-deserted atmosphere inflames.

Yet cannot heat's meridian rage deter
 The cottage-matron from her annual toil.
 On that rough bank behold her, bent to reap
 The full-grown fern, her harvest, and prepare
 Her balls of purifying ashes. First
 A firm bare spot she chooses for the hearth;
 Then strikes the steel, the tinder covers light
 With wither'd leaves and dry; then stoops to fan
 The glimmering sparks, and motionless remains,

Watching

Watching the infant flame from side to side
 Run through the thin materials. Round her stray
 Children or grandchildren, a cheerful train,
 Dispersed among the bushes; earnest each
 To execute the task her voice assigns,
 Half sport, half labour, fit for early youth.
 One plies the hook, the rake another trails;
 Another, staggering, bears the verdant load
 Uplifted in his arms; another hastes
 Her apron's burthen to discharge. The dame
 Receives their tribute; part she heaps aside
 In store for night, the embers to preserve
 From quenching dews; part on the kindled pile
 Cautious she sprinkles, duly with her fork
 Raising the half-burnt strata to admit
 Supply of flame-supporting air; as oft,
 The enliven'd mass glows bright, and crackles loud.
 Issuing from frequent chinks the smoke pours forth
 Its curling volumes; not as when condensed
 By evening's gelid atmosphere, it creeps
 Below the hill, and draws along the plain
 Its lengthen'd line, and dies away diffused
 In hazy vapour; but aspiring towers
 (For not a breath the aerial ocean moves)

In

In column perpendicular, far seen
 With broad and dusky head; to pilgrim's eye
 As view'd o'er Salem's plain the palm ascends,
 Hence shall the housewife in the distant town
 With eager gaze her whiten'd cloth admire,
 And slight the produce of Hibernian looms.

Oft from these fires pernicious sparks adrift
 Borne by the wind; or thrown by rustic hands
 With secret purpose that the soil, from bale
 And noxious vegetation freed, may yield
 Salubrious pasture to the grazing herd;
 Seize the dead grass, the furzy brake invade,
 Kindle the matted brushwood, and from hill
 To hill the sudden conflagration spread.
 Woe to the solitary oak that meets
 The fiery deluge in its course; the blaze
 Round the roots rattles, climbs the singed trunk,
 Devours the leaves, and o'er the topmost boughs
 Its smoke-stain'd canopy triumphant rears.
 Roused by the unaccustom'd sound the fox
 Starts from his rest, the scent of flame inhales
 Dismayed, and rushes forth; the heath-cock wakes,
 And springs in terror through the fervid air.
 Meanwhile the clouds dark rising from the spoil

The

The neighbouring hamlets, conscious of the cause,
 90 View unalarm'd: but at the close of day
 The horizon red with settled glow, and oft
 With spiry flashes gleaming, fills with awe
 Tracts far remote; and to the boding mind
 The picture holds of harvests stored in vain,
 Of ravaged farms, and villages destroy'd.
 Mark how yon pool, by unexhausted springs
 Still nurtured, draws the multitudes that graze
 The plains adjacent. On the bank worn bare,
 And printed with ten thousand steps, the colts
 100 In shifting groupings combine; or to the brink
 Descending, dip their pasterns in the waves
 Bolder the horned tribes, or less of heat
 And teasing insects patient, far from shore
 Bathe deep their chests; or by thick swarms pursued,
 Lash their tormented sides, and stamping quick
 And oft, the muddy fluid scatter round.
 Fix'd many an hour, till milder skies recall
 Desire of long forgotten food, they stand
 Each in its place; save when some wearied beast
 110 The pressure of the crowd no longer brooks,
 Or in mere vagrant mood its station quits
 Restless; or some intruder, from afar

Flying

Flying o'er hill and plain the gadbee's sting,
 (For still the dreaded hum she hears, and shakes
 The air with iterated lowings), spies
 The watry gleam. With wildly-tossing head,
 And tail projected far, and maddening gait,
 She plunges in, and breaks the ranks, and spreads
 Confusion, till constrain'd at length she stops,
 Wedged in the throng. Beneath a neighbouring bush,
 Poor shelter from the potent ray, reclines
 The rustic boy to count his master's herd
 Sent from yon hamlet; lest some straggler, seized
 By sharp and sudden malady, should pine
 Untended in the wood; or resolute
 To crop forbidden pasture, overleap
 The well-plash'd fence, and roam through distant fields.
 Panting, bareheaded, and with outstretch'd arms
 He sleeps; and dreams of winter's frosty gale,
 Of sunless thickets, breeze-attracting streams,
 Morn's dewy freshness, and cool rest at eve.
 From the whole surface of the tepid earth,
 But most from rivers rippling swift, and pools,
 And trickling springs, and oozy swamps exhaled,
 A vapoury steam floats, with the loaded air
 Yet uncombined; and undulating still

Flying

And

And ever twinkling, o'er the distant woods
 Sheds a blue haze, and dims their shadowy forms.
 Where through the tufted coverts of the grove
 Descends that opening glade, leading the eye
 To scenes beyond the forest's bounds removed,
 How nobly midst the fading objects stands
 Yon* fane pre-eminent! It warms my heart,
 When through the wide-spread provinces I stray
 Of this fair realm, to view the slender spire
 And massy tower from deep-embowering shades
 Oft rising in the vale, or on the side
 Of gently-sloping hills, or loftier placed,
 Crowning the wooded eminence. It looks
 As though we own'd a God, adored his power,
 Revered his wisdom, loved his mercy; deem'd
 He claims the empire of this lower world,
 And marks the deeds of its inhabitants.
 It looks as though we deem'd he fills all space
 Present throughout; and sits on heaven's high throne
 With ears attentive to the poor man's prayer.
 It looks as though we shrink not from the thought
 Of that last mansion (last, as far as earth
 Detains us), where in solemn silence laid

* Lichfield Cathedral.

WALK

D

Our

160 Our dust shall slumber; till a voice, like that
Which speaking by the astonished * prophet's mouth,
Roused the dry bones that strew'd the spacious vale
To sudden life, shall call the unnumber'd dead
Primæval Adam with his latest sons,
From every clime before their judge's face
To stand, and hear their everlasting doom.

God clothes his works with beauty. What tho' here
He has not wrapp'd in clouds the mountain's head
Magnificent, nor piled the fractured rock;
170 Nor delved the stony cavern stretching wide
Its unsupported roof; nor down the steep
Pour'd the rude cataract; nor bid the lake
Expand its splendid mirror to the sun;
Nor ocean's billowy surges wash the base
Of promontories, whose white cliffs with fowl
Swarming of every seaborn tribe, resound
With countless wings, and never wearied cries:
Yet has his hand the intermingling charms
Of hill and valley, lawn, and winding dell,
180 In rich exuberance spread; yet has his hand
Hung these wild banks with sylvan majesty.

* Ezekiel, chap. xxxvii.

WALK THE THIRD.

SUMMER.—MOONLIGHT.

THE glow of eve is faded. Scarce the West
 Retains a pale memorial of the beams
 Which fired it, when the horizontal clouds,
 With purple dies and fissures edged with gold,
 Streak'd the calm ether; while the hills were veil'd
 In glimmering haze, more tender as their chain
 Approach'd the fount of brightness, fainter still
 Where sunk the parting orb, and with the sky
 In undistinguishable splendor join'd.
 Frown'd the dark oak, and with contrasting gloom
 Athwart the blaze its sable shadows flung.
 Soon o'er the hill the yellow-tintured moon
 Rose through the twilight, and with slanting ray
 Gilded the topmost boughs; while all the vale
 And all its sloping boundaries lay wrapt
 In shade unvaried. Now with lessening sphere

And silver aspect climbing, through the leaves
And thinner spray a tremulous gleam she throws,
Chequering the mossy path beneath our feet.

20 Round her the stars and planetary balls
With cloudless lustre burn; not ranged in heaven
With mere design a twinkling aid to lend
To the late-wandering stranger, nor ordain'd
To rule our destinies, as craft averr'd,

And ancient ignorance believed, thy power,
Parent of all, they speak: they tell of worlds
Innumerable, warm'd by other suns,
And peopled with innumerable hosts
Of beings, wondrous all, nor less than man
30 Work of thy hands, and children of thy care!

While with their heads beneath their ruffled plumes
Conceal'd, the birds that sported during day,
Rest in these sheltering bushes, at whose roots
The vivid worm its nightly spark illumines;
And couching in that brake the timorous deer
Slumbers forgetful of each past alarm;
Issue from every lurking place the tribes
That animate the dusk. Heard ye the owl
Hoot to her mate responsive? 'Twas not she
40 Whom floating on white pinions near his barn

The

The farmer views well pleased, and bids his boy
 Forbear her nest; but she who cloth'd in robe
 Of unobtrusive hue, preys not beside
 Moufe-haunted cornstacks, and the thresher's floor,
 But prowls for phinder in the lonely wood.
 Hark, from the quivering bough its whirring note,
 Loud as the noise of busy maiden's wheel,
 The foe nocturnal of the insect train,
 Misnamed the goatfucker, prolongs*; then flies
 With beak expanded wide, and throat enlarged
 Even to its utmost stretch, its custom'd food
 Swallowing voracious. In uncertain jerks
 Flitting, and twittering shrill and weak, the bat
 Joins in the chase. Nor is the chase in vain.
 For ever and anon the beetle dull

* "This bird agrees with the swallow tribe in food and in the manner of taking it; differs in the time of preying, flying only by night; so with some justice may be called a nocturnal swallow. Scopoli seems to credit the report of its sucking the teats of goats; an error delivered down from the days of Aristotle. Its notes are most singular; the loudest so much resembles that of a large spinning-wheel, that the Welch call this bird *aderyn y droell*, or the wheel-bird. It begins its song most punctually on the close of day; sitting usually on a bare bough. The noise is so very violent, as to give a sensible vibration to any little building it chances to alight on, and emit this species of note." Pennant's British Zoology, vol. i. p. 416, 417.

Smiles

Smites us with sudden stroke, stopping at once
 Its heavy hum; while moths of size and form
 And motion various flutter by, with plumes
 Less gorgeous, not less delicate, than theirs
 Whose painted wings the noontide flowers adorn
 Now from the hollow trunk, its den, leaps forth
 The tawny wild-eat, fiercest of the beasts
 That roam in Britain's forests; wont on high
 To seize the rapid squirrel, or by guile
 Pluck from its nest the unsuspecting dove,
 Or to the ground descending thin the race
 That bores the sandy warren. Creeping slow
 The weasel, and in silence, through the fern
 Steals on the dozing leveret. From her feat
 She starts, and bears away the assailant fix'd
 Fast to her neck, and from the flowing vein
 Sucking the vital current. Lo, she falls.
 The puny murderer flinks into the brake
 From the drain'd carcass, sated with the blood.

Why rush'd that horseman with impetuous course
 Across the glade, still looking back; while shook
 The forest with the deep-toned bloodhound's roar?
 I know his deeds. Ere long on yonder plain
 Again shall we behold him; though he strives

00 His chafers to mislead, and round those banks
Artful his circuit takes, there will he seek
The outlet of the wild. This day at noon
With staff and halter in his hand he stray'd
As watchful of the grazing tribes; and seem'd
An herdsman bent his wandering colt to find,
And from the scanty common lead him home
To more abundant pasture. Other thoughts
Lay lurking in his breast. From prying gaze
Within the hollow lining of his coat
90 Cover'd, the musket by malignant art
For depredation form'd, in separate lengths
Disjointed, as musician parts his lute,
He bore. With never-erring skill, matured
By long experience, in the numerous crowd
The well-fed buck he mark'd, singling at once
His destined victim, as the fragrant herb
He cropp'd, unconscious of impending fate.
Perch'd on the summit of the blasted oak
The raven eyed him (often had she traced
100 His purpose), and in silence ominous
Waited her offal portion of the prey.
Meanwhile, a shot delusive, in the woods

At

At distance due by fly confederate fired,
 Alarm'd the keeper's ear. Instant he urged
 From glade to glade the vain pursuit, and left
 The endanger'd spot unguarded. The safe hour
 The plunderer seized; the tube with speed restored
 To native shape he charged, levell'd his aim,
 And drew the trigger. Clang'd the steel, and flash'd
 Destruction. Swift he dragg'd the bleeding spoil,
 And plung'd the quivering limbs and branched crest
 Deep in the brake, and fled. Bold he return'd
 When twilight lent to guilt her dubious veil
 At eve, prepared his booty to convey
 To distant mart, where pamper'd luxury
 With indiscriminate rage her dainties buys,
 Regardless whence they come, or how procured.
 But roused by sudden trappings, ere the load
 Was pack'd, across his steed the deer he throws,
 And mounts in haste. For now their nightly rounds
 The keepers hold, and soon the ranging dogs
 Sagacious note the deed, and touch the place
 Of slaughter. With loud roar they tell the tale,
 And over hill and lawn scenting the blood,
 By jolting agitation liquefied,

At

At intervals still dropping from the wound,
 Through all his bends the frightened robber chase.
 Mark where they come: eager behind them sweep
 Their masters. From our fight to all are lost,
 Pursuers and pursued. Cross we this knoll,
 And meet them as they circle round the skirts
 Of that impenetrable wood. There flies
 The caitiff! Nearer and still nearer borne
 Hang on his steps his foes. And now his form
 Shouting they recognize, and fiercer drive
 Their steeds. For long suspicious had they guefs'd
 His secret wiles; and oft at dead of night
 His cottage had they fought, and arm'd with force
 Of legal claims and just authority,
 Entrance demanded, and with patient toil
 Explored each dark recess, anxious to meet
 Proofs of his rapine: but his wary fraud
 Had baffled all their projects. Now his reign
 Is closed. Hard press'd he drops the deer: the bait
 His foes retards not; on himself they pour
 Their utmost speed. Falls his o'erlabour'd horse
 Headlong; uninjured from its back he springs,
 And plies his nimble feet, and hopes escape.
 In vain: the forest shakes him from its woods

HIAW

E

Indignant,

150

Indignant, and its murder'd habitants
 Avenges. With strong gripe the keepers end
 His fruitless struggles; while the baying hounds
 Leap round him, and with rage and conquest flush'd,
 Scarce from his trembling limbs their fangs refrain.

Indignant

I

WALK

WALK THE FOURTH.

A U T U M N.

BRIGHT gleams the ray of morn; the gentle frost
 Has gemm'd with icy dew the grass; in air
 Floats the thin rhyme diffused, not as when dense
 With wintry vapour its impervious fog
 Blots out the neighbouring coverts, and each twig
 Thickens with feathery silver, and the locks
 Of peasant lost amidst the dazzling gloom;
 But twinkling in the sunbeam spreads its veil,
 Softening each harder outline, and apace
 Before the ascending radiance melts away.
 Where in the hollow footsteps of the herd
 Stagnate the reliques of the shower, with white
 Network and crystal shoots the surface shines.
 Lo! on yon branch, whose naked spray o'ertops
 The oak's still clustering shade, the fieldfares sit
 Torpid and motionless, yet peering round

Suspicious of deceit; at our approach
 They mount, and loudly chattering from on high,
 Bid the wild woods of human guile beware.

20 How richly varied is the scene! In vain
 Spring with her emerald verdure, and the tints
 Of bloom from every tree and bush and herb
 Scattering its odours, with maturer greens,
 Thickets with woodbine canopied, and banks
 Ardent with blossom'd furze in gold array'd,
 Summer in vain would emulate the charms
 Of waning Autumn. What though one short night
 Of premature severity, one blast
 Whirling the fleety hail, would strip the boughs,
 30 As pestilence the crowded city thins?
 What though already on yon windy brow
 The lime and ash with unresisting fear
 Their station have deserted? Unsubdued
 Rises the mighty forest, and displays
 Its splendid files. Seize we the present hour,
 And view the fleeting glories ere they fade.
 Mark the nice harmony which blends the whole
 In one congenial mass, brilliant, yet chaste,
 With every die that stains the withering leaf
 40 Glowing, yet not discordant. Hither come,
 Ye

Ye sons of imitative art*, who hang
 The fictions of your pencils on our walls,
 And call them landscapes; where incongruous hues
 Seem their constrain'd vicinity to mourn,
 Where gaudy green with gaudy yellow vies,
 And blues and reds with adverse aspect glare.

Here deign to learn from nature. Hither come,
 Ye sons of imitative art, who spot
 With unconnected and unnumber'd lights

50 Your motley canvas; where the eye in vain
 Seeks for a resting-place, and vainly strives
 To trace the marr'd design, midst dazzling specks
 And universal glitter undescried.

Here deign to learn from nature; here, though late,
 Learn the peculiar majesty which crowns
 The forest, when the slowly passing clouds

57 Triple† preponderance of shadow spread,

* The following lines refer only to the works of some particular painters,
 and are by no means intended to convey indiscriminate censure.

† The painters most skilled in the management of light generally allow not
 above one-quarter of the picture for the lights, including in this portion both
 the principal and secondary lights; another quarter is as dark as possible; the
 remaining half in middle tint. Sir Joshua Reynolds's Notes on Mr. Mafon's
 Translation of Dufresnoy's Art of Painting, p. 98.

And

And separate * the broad collected lights
 With corresponding gloom; whether, beneath
 60 These oaks that crowd the darken'd foreground seen,
 Shine the illumined lawn and pasturing deer;
 Or yon recess admits the fronting ray
 Between its dusky barriers; or long gleams,
 Stretch'd o'er the tufted surface of the woods,
 Deepen the blackness of contiguous shade.

Nature, in all her works harmonious, blends
 Extremes with soft gradation, and with tints
 Kindred throughout her changeful robe adorns.
 70 Bounds yon unbroken wood the level plain?
 Light groupes detach'd and solitary trees
 Unite them. Weave yon bushes o'er the hill
 Uninterrupted thickets? Furzy brakes

* In the grouping of lights there should be a superiority of one over the rest; they should be separated, and varied in their shapes; there should not be less than three lights. The secondary lights ought, for the sake of harmony and union, to be of nearly equal brightness, though not of equal magnitude, with the principal. Sir J. Reynolds's Notes on Dufresnoy, p. 96. Yet neither any one of these secondary lights, nor all of them together, must come into any degree of competition with the principal mass of light. Sir J. Reynolds's Seven Discourses, p. 106. The highest finishing is labour in vain, unless at the same time there be preserved a breadth of light and shadow—the slightest sketch, where this breadth is preserved, will have effect. Notes on Dufresnoy, p. 99.

Aspire

Aspire to meet them. Spreads the furzy brake?
 With varying breadth the intruding greenward winds;
 And the rude mafs with smoother maze divides,
 And lo, even now when with autumnal gold
 She decks the lofty branches, on each twig
 Of humbler growth the many-colour'd fruit
 Mindful ſhe hangs. With ruddy clusters bends
 80 The thorn: with brighter ſcarlet glows the brier:
 Scarce can the ſloe ſuſtain its purple load,
 Not yet from taſte aſtere by froſt matured;
 While from the prickly ſhoots pale bryony,
 Twined round the oft encircled ſtem, ſuſpends
 Its gorgeous berries: rich in gloſſy balls,
 Privet's dark ſpikes with trembling luſtre gleam.
 Nor leſs the ground its hues accordant joins,
 With faded leaves beſtrewn, and floating wings
 Of ruſſet fern, o'erſhadow'd, whence upſtarts
 90 The woodcock; ſhe who in Norwegian waſtes,
 Or Lapland's birchen foreſts, near the ſwamp
 Suck'd from the muddy ſoil her prey, and nurſed
 Her progeny; till winter's rapid car,
 On ſummer's ſteps cloſe preſſing, from his realms
 Warn'd her, and earth her probing beak repell'd.
 Why in fix'd attitude beneath yon oak

Listen the deer? From morn to eve they stand
 Expectant of the falling acorn. Hark!
 From the bare bank it leaps. Quick to the sound
 At once they turn, and seize it; then resume
 Their posture. High above, the golden wren
 Sports on the boughs; she who her slender size
 Vaunting, and radiant breast, half dares to vie
 With those gay wanderers †, whose resplendent wings
 With insect hum still flutter over the pride
 Of Indian gardens, while the hollow tongue
 Explores the flower, and drains the honied juice.
 Now the chill evening and the near approach
 Of winter from the shaggy cottage draw
 Yon groupe in search of fuel: Youthful hands

* The golden crested wren is the least of British birds. It may readily be distinguished not only by its size, but by the beautiful scarlet mark on the head, bounded on each side by a fine yellow line—it frequents woods, and is found principally on oak trees. Though so small a bird, it endures our winters. Pennant's British Zoology, vol. i. p. 379, 380.

† "Humming-birds subsist on the nectar or sweet juice of flowers—they never settle on a flower during the action of extracting the juice; but flutter continually like bees, moving their wings very quick, and making a humming noise, whence their name." Latham's Synopsis of Birds, p. 770. "The above account of the manners will in general suit all the birds of this genus. Ibid. p. 771. On the structure of the tongue of the humming-bird, see ibid. p. 745.

Gather the scatter'd sticks, or with light hook
 Fix'd to a pole pluck down the mouldering bough;
 While the dead stump the sturdy peasant hews,
 Or looking watchful round left prying eyes
 Observe him, from the oak by tempests torn
 Rends off the shiver'd ruin with its load
 Of leafy spray; backward he throws his weight,
 And tugs with iron grasp; in vain the branch
 Recoils with spring elastic, and in vain
 Still by tough splinters to the trunk adheres.
 Meantime yon boy in wanton mischief tears
 The ivy twisted in contortions rude
 Round the tall maple, and the stem divides
 With stroke malicious. Soon the verdant mass,
 Robb'd of its nutriment, shall fade, and while
 The lifeless tendrils still their hold maintain,
 To May's bright greens a dusky foil oppose.

How forcible the contrast, now the sun
 Gilds the steep woods of these autumnal banks,
 While an unvaried breadth of sober gloom
 Purples the expanse below; where oft the heron,
 Posted in Dove's rich meads, with patient guile
 And pale gray plumes with watry blue suffused
 Stands like a shadow; then with outstretch'd neck

Rises aloft, and to the distant fen,
 Screaming, with solemn flappings wings her flight.
 Thence Northward to those misty heights the eye
 Glances, between whose craggy sides confined,
 Low in his native dale, with stream as pure
 As melts from mountain snows Dove laves his rocks
 Wild as by magic planted, yet with grace*
 Of symmetry arranged; now foaming darts
 Along the stony channel, tufted isles
 Now circles, now with glassy surface calm
 Reflects th' impending glories of his hills.
 Or turn we Southward, where on yonder cliff
 High o'er his ampler wave projecting shine
 Those ivy-mantled towers †; towers once with sighs
 Sadden'd of captive Mary, jocund once

* " From the description given of Dovedale, even by men of taste, we had
 " conceived it to be a scene rather of curiosity than of beauty. We supposed
 " the rocks were formed into the most fantastic shapes; and expected to see a
 " gigantic display of all the conic sections. But we were agreeably deceived.
 " The whole composition is chaste, and picturesquely beautiful, in a high de-
 " gree." Mr. Gilpin's Observations on the Mountains and Lakes of Cumber-
 land, &c. vol. ii. p. 228.

† Tutbury Castle, once the prison of Mary Queen of Scots; and in earlier
 times the residence of John of Gaunt.

150 With minstrelsy, when Lancaster conven'd
 The throng of barons in his festive hall.
 She knew no liberty, th' imprison'd Queen,
 Till death her chains unloos'd; with anguish faint
 If ever the fresh gale she sought to breathe,
 Frown'd the bleak battlement and guarded wall,
 And mark'd her limits. Happier he, the bard,
 Rov'd unrestrain'd; and when his potent lord
 Bade him the song prepare, these sylvan depths,
 These silent glades instant he pierced, and hung
 160 Even on yon oak his harp; then musing stray'd;
 Then vocal tried the meditated lay,
 And swept the strings; while gaz'd the listening deer,
 And the woods rang with harmony divine.

Man loves the forest. Since in Eden's groves
 His fire, yet innocent, enraptur'd view'd
 "Insufferable height of loftiest shade",
 "Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm,
 "A sylvan scene," man has the forest lov'd.
 Those groves no autumn knew; eternal spring
 170 With all the blessings of the varied year
 In rich profusion crown'd them. But when death

* Milton's Paradise Lost, book iv. line 138—140.

Seized on his prey, fall'n man, destruction stretch'd
 Across the woods her sceptre. With the axe
 She fells them; with the tempest by the roots
 Uptears them; by the wasting scythe of time
 She lays them low; and yearly o'er their boughs
 Still gay with life a robe funereal flings.
 Yet shall eternal spring her sway resume
 In that new promised earth, promised by voice
 180 Of power unbounded and unfailing truth;
 Where by no sin to desolation doom'd,
 (For sin shall not be there,) no storms annoy'd,
 No violence ravag'd, no decay impair'd,
 185 Thy works, great God, for such thy will, shall stand
 Firm through the ages of Eternity.

WALK THE FIFTH.

WINTER.—SNOW.

AT length th' expected snows descend. The earth
 Her axis thrice has circled since the blast
 Grew keen, still veering eastward; and when shone
 The firmament on high with cloudless light,
 Incumbent on the gray horizon's verge
 A settled gloom has hung. This morn, when first
 O'er yon bank climb'd the sun, a fleecy shower
 Tinging with thin-spread white the frozen brook,
 The bareworn track, and close-depastured plain,
 Accompanied his course: ere long he chased
 The congregated vapours; yet, while noon
 Blaz'd forth refulgent, from some half-form'd cloud;
 Whose filmy veil by careless eyes unseen
 Dimm'd, yet scarce dimm'd, the azure vault of heaven,
 Descending oft the solitary flake
 Foretold the secret purpose of the skies.

Now

Now mid-day warmth declines; dense haze obscures
 The turbid atmosphere; the clouds advance,
 Not as the vehicles of rain, disposed
 20 In separate masses, and of varying hue;
 Not like the mansions of fruit-wasting hail,
 Lurid and dark; nor those where thunder dwells,
 Of wildest forms, crowling with purple dies,
 And 'gainst the nether streams of air propell'd
 By their own currents; but of aspect dun,
 Of texture uniform, and blending quick
 In one unbroken surface, onward move
 In firm array, and lead the rising gale.
 Across the whole ethereal arch they stretch
 30 Their dusky mantle; and while louder sounds
 And louder still the wind's tumultuous voice,
 Now pausing, now with long and hollow swell
 Redoubling fierce, their arrowy stores discharge.

While thus the echoing tempest beats abroad,
 Beneath th' impervious covert of this wood
 Of antient holies, whose umbrageous heads
 The gusts of Autumn have in vain assail'd,
 Range we secure, and view the distant scene.

Mark on that road, whose unobstructed course
 40 With long white line th' unburied furze divides,

Yon

Yon solitary horseman urge his way.
 He, not unmindful of the brooding storm,
 Ere yet by strong necessity compell'd
 Of pressing occupation he exchanged
 The blazing hearth, the firm-compacted roof,
 For naked forests and uncertain skies,
 With wise precaution arm'd himself to meet
 The winter's utmost rage. In filken folds
 Twice round his neck the handkerchief he twin'd.
 50 His legs he cas'd in boots of mighty size,
 And oft experienced strength; warm'd through and through
 In chimney-corner; and with glossy face
 Prepar'd descending torrents to repel,
 As roll the round drops from the silvery leaf
 Of rain-besprinkled colewort, or the plumes
 Of seagull spotting in the broken wave.
 Then o'er his limbs the stout great-coat he drew,
 With collar rais'd aloft, and threefold cape
 Sweep below sweep in wide concentric curves
 60 Low down his back dependent; on his breast
 The folds he cross'd, and in its destin'd hole
 Each straining button fix'd; erect he stood,
 Like huge portmanteau on its end uprear'd.
 Fearless he sallied forth; nor yet disdain'd

The

The heart'ning draught from tankard capp'd with foam,
 By host officious to the horseblock borne
 With steady hand, and eloquently prais'd;
 While lingering on the step his eye he turn'd
 To every wind, and mark'd th' embattled clouds
 Ranging their squadrons in the fullen East,
 How fares he now? Caught on the middle waste,
 Where no deep wood its hospitable gloom
 Extends; no friendly thicket bids him cower
 Beneath its tangled roof; no lonely tree
 Prompts him to seek its leeward side; and cleave,
 Erect and into narrowest space compress,
 To the bare trunk, if haply it may ward
 The driving tempest, with bewilder'd haste
 Onward he comes. "Hither direct thy speed;
 "This sheltering wood —" He hears not! Mark his head
 Oblique, presented to the storm; his hand,
 Envelop'd deep beneath th' inverted cuff,
 With ineffectual grasp strives to confine
 His ever flapping hat; the cold drench'd glove
 Clings round th' imprison'd fingers. O'er his knees
 His coat's broad skirt, scanty now proved too late,
 He pulls and pulls impatient, muttering wrath
 At pilfering tailors. Baffled and perplex'd,

With

90 With joints benumb'd and aching, scarce he holds
 The rein, scarce guides the steed with breathless toil
 O'erpower'd, and shrinking sideways from the blast,
 Mark how that steed, with icy mane, and head
 Depressed, and quivering ears now forward bent,
 Now backward swiftly thrown, and offering still
 Their convex penthouse to the shifting gale;
 Mark how that steed, on indurated balls
 Of snow uprais'd, like schoolboy rear'd on stilts,
 Labours unbalanced; the fallacious prop,
 100 Now this, now that, breaks short; with sudden jerk
 He sinks, half falling, and recovering quick
 On legs of length unequal flutters along.
 Trembles his rider; while the snow upheaves
 In drifts athwart his course projected broad,
 Or o'er the uncover'd gravel rattling sweeps
 Caught up in sudden eddies, and aloft,
 Like smoke, in suffocating volumes whirl'd.
 The road he quits unwary, wandering wide
 O'er the bleak waste, midst brushwood wrapt in snow,
 Down rough declivities and fractured banks,
 110 Through miry plashes, cavities unseen,
 And bogs of treacherous surface; till afar
 From all that meets his recollection borne,

Dismay'd by hazards scarce escaped, and dread
 Of heavier perils imminent, he stands
 Dismounted, and aghaft. Now evening draws
 Her gathering shades around; the tempest fierce
 Drives fiercer. Chilled within him sinks his heart,
 Panting with quick vibrations. The wild blast
 Appall'd he hears, thinks on his wife and babes,
 And doubts if ever he shall see them more.
 But comfort is at hand; the skies have spent
 In that last gust their fury. From the west
 The setting sun with horizontal gleam
 Cleaves the dense clouds; and through the golden breach
 Strikes the scathed oak, whose branches peel'd and bare
 'Gainst the retiring darkness of the storm
 With fiery radiance glow. The traveller views
 The well-known landmark, lifts to heaven his eyes,
 Swimming with gratitude, the friendly track
 Regains, and speeds exulting to his home.

WALK

WALK THE SIXTH.

WINTER.—FROST.

THE fleecy mantle which of late the lawns
 Conceal'd, and burying deep the furzy brake
 Display'd, upheaved in undulating mounds,
 A rude resemblance of the forms below,
 Is vanish'd. From the south dissolving gales
 Blew; the snows felt their influence. In the woods,
 Humid and comfortless, from dawn to eve
 Were heard incessant drippings, pattering loud
 When the wind moved the branches. The soft mafs
 Beneath of every drop the impreffion took,
 Pierced into hollows numerous as the cells
 That guard the luscious treasures of the bee.
 Soon on the level plain green spots emerged,
 Where raised the bufy ant or delving mole
 Its fubterranean dwelling: floppy pools
 In the furrrounding pulp lay flagnant. Streams

20 Trickled from every bank; and down the hills
 Spread sheety o'er the slopes, or rush'd amain
 In the deep gullies. Swell'd the turbid brook,
 And oft by congregated piles of ice
 Obstructed, raged aloud, and strew'd the vale
 With fragments. Of the universal white
 No speck was left, save where in lonely dell,
 Fronting the north, amidst the general rout
 The drift its station still maintain'd, and seem'd
 To wait for reinforcements from the skies.
 Earth of its load was lighten'd, and absorb'd
 The moisture: sunny gleams and breezy air
 The surface dried. Now frost again ascends
 30 His throne; and kindling with peculiar glow
 Heaven's cloudless vault, and fixing firm the ground,
 Crisp to the tread, from hot and crowded rooms
 Calls us his bracing atmosphere to breathe,
 And witness his invigorating power.

Bend we our steps beside this forest brook,
 And trace its windings. In yon flat morafs,
 Where spiry rushes in divergent files
 Rise fledged with rhyme, where many a stunted bush,
 Alder or fallow, cropt by nibbling deer,
 40 Betrays the dampness of the soil beneath,

From

From secret springs it rises. Issuing thence
 Awhile in naked channel o'er the plain
 It wanders; now in short and sudden turns
 Twisting round narrow points, as though it fled
 Back to its source; now in extended curves
 Sweeping; now glistening in long reaches; now
 With fretted surface and complaining sound
 Hurrying down bright cascades. Thence swift it dives
 Into this sylvan glen. Mark how it whirls
 In circling eddies round that alder's root,
 And far within the brink, where half congeal'd
 Lingers the foam, the trout's dark hold prepares.
 Here, the flat turf with easy flexure meets
 The wave; abrupt with contrast bold descends
 The adverse side, whence starts the aspiring ash,
 Or time-worn maple, thorn, or finewy oak
 Deep-fix'd, and with its wreathed roots o'erhangs
 The cavern'd margin. View the marly cliff,
 Its base by oozing springs with frostwork glazed,
 Various beyond the forms which fancy weaves;
 Where crystal columns glitter, and disposed
 Tier above tier, pellucid cornices,
 With plummy darts and sparkling gems emboss'd,
 Tell to what height the current lately raised

Its

Its ampler swell, and with diminish'd tide
 Sunk gradual. Here, where in its pebbly bed
 Rippling it runs, a narrow range of ice
 Grows to the edge, or round the uncover'd stone
 Concretes. There, where the broad and deeper reach
 Spreads smooth, from bank to bank its pavement firm
 Stretches, nor hides the gliding rill beneath:
 Or by the stream deserted rears in air
 Delusive bridges, to the heedless foot
 Of deer, or stranger halting o'er the wild,
 Dangerous, and loudly crashing in their fall.
 Lo! from its haunt, by crowding alders screen'd,
 Where mantling in the still unfrozen flood
 Aquatic weeds breathe warmth, at our approach
 Alarm'd on founding wings the wild duck soars,
 And plies to distant solitudes her course.
 The snipe flies screaming from the marshy verge,
 And towers in airy circles o'er the wood,
 Still heard at intervals; and oft returns,
 Her favourite glade reluctant to forsake.
 Climb we this brow: the groves, whose naked
 scenes
 Still have their charms, invite us. Mark yon oak,
 Fix'd central in the opening lawn; while ranged
 Irregularly

Irregularly round to distance due
 The subject woods retire. His rugged roots
 90 Upheave the soil. His huge and furrow'd trunk,
 Bulging with many a rough protuberance,
 The lapse attests of numerous ages, fled
 With all their generations; while his top,
 Pierced, and snapt short, and deeply scorch'd, a blast
 Wing'd with tempestuous lightning, and of more
 Than common rage records. Projecting wide
 O'er the bare plain with horizontal stretch,
 His arms enormous, girt with wither'd leaves,
 And tufted still with millets, no more
 100 By Druid hands and golden sickle cropt,
 Rear high their elbowy twistings; and uphold
 With firm support the thickly-woven spray.
 Not so that lofty ash, from yonder groupe
 Advanced; the stem, patch'd with dark mosses, lifts
 Its flowing line; in light and wavy sweeps
 Diverge the branches, pendent, yet with points
 Upturn'd, and fable buds, loth to confide
 Their winged foliage to the vernal breeze.
 Close by its side more pendent droops the birch,
 110 With silver bark in flaky stripes detach'd
 Conspicuous, and in swelling veins prepares

Its vinous juice: behind, the dark yew frowns
 With boughs elastic, once the bulwark deem'd
 Of English freedom, when her warrior sons
 Drew the long bow, and pointed shafts repell'd
 Invading Gaul, or Caledonia's race.
 With equal pride the clasping ivy boasts
 Its leaf untamed; not as when, blotch'd by art,
 With garish tints it decorates the wall
 Of painted summer-house, or trim alcove;
 But cloth'd in sober garb its tendrils flings
 Amidst its native thickets; and in rough
 And spiral coil wrapt round some neighbouring tree,
 Hazle or maple, spreads its mantling robe,
 And loads the boughs with verdure not their own.
 But foremost of the band, whose hardy files
 In summer vest the assaults of frost defy,
 With glittering leaves and native coral shines
 The holly: now its solitary cone
 On pale gray trunk it raises; now combines
 Its crowded tops and intermingling stems
 In social groupings; now stretches o'er the hills
 In woods continuous, with nocturnal gloom
 Still dusky, save where through some narrow cleft
 The searching ray finds entrance, or a shower

Of splendid atoms twinkles in the sun,
When from the rhimy boughs the ringdove breaks.

Why gleams the axe? Why falls the verdant branch?
Falls it with emblematic green to deck

140 The fane, or in the cheerful window hung

The village grace; while man adoring learns

The wonders of his Saviour's birth, or hails

With festive gratitude the newborn year?

Still heavier sound the unremitted blows,

And ampler desolation strews the ground.

Call'd by the well-known echoes, that bespeak

To all the herds throughout the neighbouring lawns

Scatter'd the hour of food, when sylvan spoils

The shrivel'd herbage of the plain supply,

150 Hasten in troops the deer. The prickly leaves

Fearless they crop; then seize the slender shoots;

Then from the firmer branches strip the rind,

Not doom'd, by schoolboy spread on viscous twig,

To snare the antient tenants of their shade.

Behind, the children of the hamlet throng

With cold stiff fingers, where the stagnant blood

Purples the skin, the abandon'd boughs to drag

Homewards. With fancy's eye I see them bend

159 At evening o'er the hearth, and watch the smoke

160
 Burst forth in puffs; while steams the bubbling sap,
 And hisses in the half-extinguish'd fire.
 See in the vale, whose concave depth receives
 The waters draining from these shelvy banks
 When the shower beats, in slowly moving train
 Pensive the cattle to the frozen pool
 To quench their customary thirst advance.
 With wondering stare and fruitless search they trace
 The solid margin round. Awhile they stand
 In disappointment mute; with ponderous feet
 Then bruise the surface: from the wood rebounds
 Each stroke, forth gushes the imprison'd wave.

170
 Thus through the sylvan realms of Winter stray
 Our devious steps. We linger, pleased to note
 His mien peculiar. Deem we then the face
 Of changeful seasons varied but to charm
 The gazing eye; and looth the vacant mind
 Say, is not nature's ample store display'd,
 Even to the careless wanderer in the field
 With moral purpose? Wisdom's dictates pure,
 180
 Truths of momentous import, character'd
 By more than human finger, every page
 Discloses. He, who form'd this beauteous globe,
 Studios amidst its brightest scenes has hung

Fit emblems of a perishable world,
 And all its transient glory. The full buds
 Does spring unfold; and thick as drops of dew
 Spangling the grass, the purple bloom diffuse?
 Comes a chill blight, and bids the sanguine youth
 Read in its ravages a lesson that tells
 Of frustrate plans and disappointed hopes.
 Do summer suns the mead with herbage load,
 And tinge the ripening ear? With sudden rage
 Descends the thunderstorm; the river swells
 Impatient of control; and while its waves
 Devour the promised harvest, calls aloud
 On man to tremble for his daily bread.
 The faded leaves does autumn scatter wide;
 Or winter rend the desolated boughs,
 And lay the fathers of the forest low?
 The blast that executes their fierce command
 To man proclaims, "This earth is not thy home."
 It bids him seek, and heaven the search will bless,
 A more enduring dwelling-place; the joys
 Unutterable, which nor eye hath seen,
 Nor ear hath heard, nor heart of man * conceived,

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

Joys which Omnipotence itself prepares
 For those who love their God; joys then to open
 Their stores, when the last trump shall shake the skies;
 And all the palm-crown'd sons of holiness,
 With garments wash'd in their Redeemer's blood,
 Shout their hosannas round his throne; and join'd
 With angels, and to angels equal made,
 Bathe in the fount of everlasting bliss.

• Rev. vii. 14.

FINIS.



